

Potential role of street foods as micronutrients source among low income groups in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Although more than 40% of Nairobi's lower-income groups consume street foods, there is paucity of information available for urban policy makers and programmers on the potential contribution of street foods to micronutrient intake. A cross-sectional survey and a non-repetitive 24-hour dietary recall were employed to determine household intake of vitamin A, iron and zinc, and the proportion of the intakes from street foods in the selected Kangemi and Dandora estates in Nairobi, Kenya (low and middle-low income groups respectively). Results indicate that there was no significant statistical difference in the consumption pattern of street foods between the two sites. Absolute vitamin A, iron and zinc intake from street foods were comparatively lower among the low income groups as compared to middle-low income groups, these variations were not significant except for zinc. Street foods were less important vitamin A source in Kangemi (4.4% of total intake and 2.64% of the RDA) than in Dandora (26% of total intake and 9.46% of the RDA). The proportion of those who obtained at least 50% of total vitamin A from street foods was also significantly higher in Dandora. Iron intake contributed by street foods significantly differed with Dandora being higher (30%) than Kangemi (21%). Although not significantly different, those who obtained at least 50% iron from street foods was higher in Dandora than Kangemi. Iron intake from street foods in both sites (15mg/AE in Kangemi and 25mg/AE in Dandora) was sufficient to meet the RDA for iron for adults (5-28mg/AE). Zinc intake contributed by street foods was not significantly higher in Dandora (25.2%) than Kangemi (16.7%). The proportion of those who obtained at least 50% of their zinc intake from the street foods was also insignificantly higher in Dandora (12%) than Kangemi (7%). Overall, street foods are better contributors of iron (26% of total intake) and zinc (21%) than vitamin A (12%). Apparent factors that tend to potentially influence street foods contribution to micronutrient nutrition are economic status, availability and proximity to street foods, consumption pattern and the type of street foods sold. Street food trade deserves recognition by urban policy makers in order to improve the opportunities of vendors to support their livelihood and to ensure the availability of affordable, safe and nutritious food for low income consumers.